

## REMARKS

Claims 1 and 9-11 have been amended. Claims 12-15 have been added. A new Abstract is submitted. Reexamination and reconsideration are respectfully requested.

In the Office Action, claims 1-11 were rejected as being anticipated by SMITH et al. (US 6,184,823 B1). Applicants respectfully traverse this rejection in view of the clarifying amendments made to independent claims 1, 9, 10 and 11 as well as the following remarks.

Referring to claim 1, Applicants recite a voice reference apparatus that classifies a plurality of search targets (for example, names of ski resorts) into a plurality of division blocks (for example, state names). The apparatus searches for a search target by first specifying a division block (for example, a particular state) and then specifying the search target (for example, the name of a ski resort), wherein specification of at least the search target is enabled so as to be made via voice. In particular, the plurality of search targets belong to a single category (for example, ski resorts) categorized according to attributes (for example, places where skiing occurs) of search targets. The apparatus includes a first storage device in which recognition data related to the plurality of search targets corresponding to individual division blocks are stored. A second storage device is provided in which division block-related information indicating one or more other division blocks related to a given division block through a specific relationship in the category (for example, states that are adjacent to the given state, i.e., North Carolina, West Virginia and Maryland are adjacent to Virginia) is stored. A recognition data selection device selects recognition data

corresponding to only a certain division block and one or more other division blocks related to the certain division block specified by the division block-related information when the certain division block has been specified. A voice recognition processing device performs voice recognition based upon voice recognition data generated by using the recognition data selected by the recognition data selection device and audio data corresponding to the search target specified by voice.

By contrast, in SMITH et al., a geographic data base 40 (see Fig. 5) is provided and is comprised of a plurality of subsets, such as postal codes and point-of-interest data. To permit the data subsets to work together, external indices 147 are stored (col. 9, line 67 - col. 10, line 9). Importantly, however, these external indices 147 only provide the relationships between the different kinds of data records (col. 5, lines 4-7, Figs. 5 and 12). The external indices 147 do not provide the relationships according to the presently claimed invention between divisional blocks (such as particular states) into which a plurality of search targets (such as the names of ski resorts) belonging to a single category (such as ski resorts in general) categorized according to attributes (such as areas where skiing occurs) of search targets are classified.

Making this difference even more clear is that SMITH only provides a relationship between a record inside a subset (such as a point of interest in subset 139) and another record inside another subset (such as a particular postal code within the postal code subset 143) (see col. 24, lines 4-33, Fig. 12). In other words, SMITH does not disclose, suggest or even hint at providing a relationship between the subsets themselves. Whereas in Applicants' invention, the second

storage device stores division block-related information indicating one or more other division blocks related to a given division block through a specific relationship in the category (for example, neighboring states to a given state, such as Virginia). Hence, Applicants submit SMITH does not teach a relationship between division blocks according to the present invention and, as such, Applicants submit independent claims 1 and 9-11 are patentable thereover.

Regarding the dependent claims, the Office Action maintains that the features of claims 2-7 are taught by SMITH, referring to col. 9, lines 14-40 and the associated figures. Applicants respectfully traverse this rejection. In fact, SMITH does not teach the features recited in Applicants' claims 2-7 at all. Rather, SMITH may, at best, disclose subsets individually including different kinds of data (col. 9, lines 14-40). SMITH does not, however, disclose division blocks into which a plurality of search targets belonging to a single category categorized according to the attributes of the search targets are classified. Furthermore, SMITH does not teach that the plurality of search targets are classified into geographic areas, such as public administrative zones as recited in claims 2-7.

Separately, regarding Applicants' independent claim 9, a voice recognition navigation apparatus is recited that contains a voice recognition processing device that performs voice recognition based upon voice recognition data generated by using the recognition data selected by a recognition data selection device and audio data corresponding to a search target specified by voice. In SMITH, however, the passage cited by the Examiner at col. 5, lines 49-53 merely describes a navigation system 10. It does not recite a voice recognition

navigation system. Admittedly, SMITH does disclose that his navigation system 10 can include a user interface utilizing a voice recognition program (col. 6, lines 8-21). Other than this discussion of using a known voice recognition user interface, SMITH is entirely silent on any of the practical details of the voice recognition and its interrelationships with the recognition data generated by using a recognition data selection device as recited in Applicants' claims. Accordingly, Applicants submit claims 1-11 are patentable for this reason as well.

In view of the foregoing, Applicants submit claims 1-11 are now in condition for allowance. An early notice to that effect is solicited.

Summarizing, Applicants have made an important contribution to the art to which the present subject matter pertains, for which no counterpart is shown in any of the art or combination of same. The invention is fully set forth and carefully delimited in all claims in this case. Under the patent statute, Applicants should not be deprived of the protection to which they are entitled for this contribution. Accordingly, it is respectfully requested that favorable reconsideration and an early notice of allowance be provided for all remaining claims.


If there are any questions regarding this amendment or the application in general, a telephone call to the undersigned would be appreciated since this should expedite the prosecution of the application for all concerned.

If necessary to effect a timely response, this paper should be considered as a petition for an Extension of Time sufficient to effect a timely response, and

please charge any deficiency in fees or credit any overpayments to Deposit  
Account No. 05-1323 (Docket #1420/49237).

Respectfully submitted,

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